

The Wedding Feast of Cana

The Wedding Feast

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Epiphany, to most of us, means the three kings. But the term Epiphany means “manifestation” or “revelation,” and traditionally the Feast of the Epiphany celebrates three revelatory events, the Magi’s visit, the Lord’s baptism, and the wedding feast at Cana.

The link is not hard to see. The Magi’s homage shows divinity of this child-king who is to die for his people. Jesus’ baptism in the Jordan reveals a glimpse of God’s inner life as Trinity. And the wedding feast of Cana reveals the divine power at work in this carpenter from Nazareth. And it does so smack dab in the middle of everyday life, at a wedding reception.

The fourth gospel calls the Lord’s miracles “signs.” They all point to Jesus’s divinity. But they also profoundly symbolize what it is that he has come into this world to do for us. At Cana, he transforms water into wine. Now water is good but rather ordinary. It does not have much taste. Wine in ancient Israel was special, generally reserved for feasts and sabbaths. It is a symbol of joy, and the exhilaration it provides is a great blessing. Note that the wine Jesus provided was rich, flavorful, and of the very best quality.

The Old Covenant was good. It was good to know that God is one that the way to please him is through just actions. That’s really what the ten commandments are all about—justice to God, who alone deserves our worship, and justice to other human beings who all deserve our respect, seeing that they are made in God’s image. But this covenant did not tell the whole story—the inner life of God as Trinity, this is present there only in hints and shadows. Neither does the Old Covenant provide people with the power to live the commandments. The law is written on stone tablets, and people must try to live it through sheer will power.



Jesus transforms this situation. Religious life now becomes intimacy with God, sharing in the eternal celebration of love between Father, Son and Spirit. And the new law is written in hearts by the Holy Spirit who empowers Christians to live it. Natural human life is good. But the new supernatural life brought by Christ is richer and much more flavorful.



How does Jesus work this transformation? Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the same power that transformed chaos into paradise, a virgin into the mother of the messiah, and bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ.

Christ was anointed with this wonder-working Spirit following his baptism. We share in this anointing through confirmation. So why do we think that the gifts of the Spirit were only for New Testament times? Or why would we think that they are only given to the greatest saints? St. Paul in I Corinthians 12 says that there are different works of the Spirit but it is the same God who accomplishes all of them in everyone. And then, "to each person the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good."

At the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Church officially taught that the charisms of the Holy Spirit were not limited to the apostolic era but are essential equipment for all times and are poured out upon all the faithful through baptism and confirmation. That means that we Catholics belong to the largest Pentecostal Church in the world.

So what is needed to awaken the wonder-working power of the Spirit that lies dormant in the lives of so many Catholics? Going back to Cana, it seems to me that if Mary's intercession could be a catalyst for the first miracle, it could be the catalyst for many more.

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